



KANSAS CITY, MO. POLICE DEPARTMENT  
**PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTION**

DATE OF ISSUE  
05-25-2016

EFFECTIVE DATE  
05-25-2016

NO.  
16-03

SUBJECT

**Death Investigations**

AMENDS

REFERENCE

RSMo. 58.720.1.4D

RESCINDS

P.I. 10-02

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This written directive provides guidelines and procedures for handling cases of death excluding deaths resulting from vehicular accidents.

## **II. PROCEDURE**

### **A. All Cases of Death**

#### **1. Officer Responsibilities**

- \*a. Request a sergeant to respond to the scene and supervise the preliminary investigation and assist in determination of cause of death, natural or other than natural.
  - \*b. Contact Violent Crimes Division (VCD) personnel from the scene before any other notification is made.
    - (1) All pertinent information will be given to VCD personnel regarding the death.
    - (2) The name and rank/title of the person notified and the time notified will be recorded on the Officer's Daily Activity Log.
  - c. Exercise their authority and not allow any personnel or persons to enter and contaminate or alter the scene unless their entry is necessary for the preservation of life and/or the safety of first responders.
- \*2. The Medical Examiner's (ME) Office will be notified and will respond to all confirmed death investigation scenes. If VCD personnel determine that their response to the scene:
- a. Is necessary, they will be responsible for making the notification to the ME.

- b. Is not necessary, the reporting officer will be responsible for making the notification to the ME.

\*3. Personal Property

- a. Personal property on the deceased's body will be recovered by the ME (RSMo. 58.720.1.4D) in the event of a criminal investigation or the death is of a suspicious nature.
- b. Any dispute over personal property is a civil dispute and members will only keep the peace.

- 4. Crime Scene Investigation Section (CSIS) will only be notified by VCD personnel to respond to the scene.

B. Cases of Apparent Death Other Than Natural

- 1. In addition Section II, A, of this directive, the following procedures will be adhered to.

- 2. Officer Responsibilities

- \*a. Determine if a crime has been committed and the victim's death was other than natural causes.

- (1) If an officer is unable to determine or is doubtful that the death was of natural causes, the officer will handle the incident as a death other than natural.

- (2) Officers will not make assumptions about the nature or the circumstances of the victim's death.

- (3) All apparent deaths other than natural should be treated as potential homicide scenes.

- \*b. Protect and preserve the crime scene by establishing an adequate, secure perimeter consisting of a primary and secondary (inner and outer) crime scene.

- (1) If a crime scene involving a weapon becomes dangerous, the officer has the discretion to move the weapon for the safety of the officer and protection of evidence. Otherwise, the weapon will not be moved, touched, or unloaded.

- (2) No access to the crime scene will be allowed until arrival of VCD personnel, unless VCD personnel have authorized CSIS's access and collection of evidence.
    - (3) If the victim is in a place where they are visible to the public or at risk of contamination of evidence, cover the victim using only a new and unused disposable blanket by placing the slick, vinyl side of the blanket against the body.
  - c. Maintain a Crime Scene Log, Form 227 P.D.
  - \*d. Initiate all preliminary investigative procedures and complete necessary reports; e.g., "Dead Body," as instructed by VCD.
  - e. Unless relieved by a detective at the scene, ensure security of property after all evidence is collected.
  - \*f. Contact and separate the reporting party or parties and all potential witnesses, obtain their identity, and request that they remain at the scene until they have been released by VCD personnel.
- \*3. If the presence of the body at the scene causes an unruly crowd to gather (i.e. civil disorder, riot, etc.) that could destroy possible evidence in the investigation, the responding sergeant:
- a. Will exhaust all other options to secure the crime scene before resolving to move the body; i.e., expanding the crime scene and perimeter of the area, additional perimeter officers, etc.
  - b. When all other options have been exhausted with negative results, the body may be transported to a different location. The body should be transported to a medical facility as soon as possible and may be done so by:
    - (1) The ME's transport van, in which case the body will be transported directly to the ME's office.
    - (2) An ambulance. Once the ambulance has relocated to a safe area, the ambulance will meet the ME's transport van and relinquish the body to the ME.
    - (3) Any means necessary, should all other options not be available.

- \*4. Regional Criminalistics Division personnel and the ME Investigator will collect all evidence pertinent to the investigation and prepare all necessary evidence reports.
- 5. VCD personnel will be responsible for the notification of the closest relative.

C. Cases of Apparent Natural Death

- 1. In addition to Section II, A, of this directive, the following procedures will be adhered to.
- 2. Once the ME determines that the cause of death is natural; the primary officer dispatched to the scene will contact by phone or in person the specific physician, relative, or other responsible person associated with the deceased, and the mortuary to ascertain the following facts:
  - a. That a physician is willing to sign the death certificate; and
  - b. That a relative or other responsible person associated with the deceased is present and takes custody of the personal property of the deceased; and
  - c. That arrangements have been made between the responsible person and a mortuary to pick up and transport the body to a funeral home.
- 3. An officer will remain at the scene until the removal of the body when one of the following conditions exists:
  - a. The ME is transporting the body, or
  - b. A mortuary is responding and the family or responsible person is distraught or requests the officer's presence.
- 4. Reporting Requirements
  - a. If a physician is willing to sign the death certificate, all information may be documented on the Officer's Daily Activity Log. An Incident Report will not be needed.

- b. An Incident Report titled, "Dead Body," will be completed only when the following circumstances exist:
  - (1) The deceased was not under medical care; and
  - (2) A physician cannot be contacted or declines to sign the death certificate; or,
  - (3) A relative or other responsible person associated with the deceased will not make arrangements for removal to a mortuary or medical facility.
- c. The Incident Report will include the following:
  - (1) Who responded from the ME's Office and confirmed the death.
  - (2) A description of obvious signs of death. Obvious signs of death are lack of vital life signs plus rigor mortis, lividity, or a combination of both.
  - (3) The name and rank/title of the person notified in the VCD, and the time notification was made.

5. Notification of Closest Relative

- \*a. If a relative (person who is connected with another by blood or marriage) or other responsible person associated with the deceased is not present, the responding sergeant will make every reasonable effort to establish the identity of the closest relative and attempt to notify that person.
  - (1) If the identity of the closest relative is established but cannot be contacted, the officer will make a notation of such in the Incident Report listing the name, address, telephone number, and relationship to the victim.
  - (2) If the identity of the closest relative cannot be established while at the scene, it will be noted in the Incident Report.

- b. When the responding sergeant cannot make the notification, VCD personnel will be responsible for the notification of the closest relative. Patrol Bureau supervisors will assist with notification at the request of a VCD commander or supervisor.
- 6. The premises will be secured after the body has been removed.

Darryl Forté  
Chief of Police

Adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

Michael Rader  
Board President

**DISTRIBUTION:** All Department Personnel  
Public View Master Index – Internet  
Department Master Index – Intranet  
Policy Acknowledgement SyStem (PASS)